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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 001788

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [BA](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [REGION](#)
SUBJECT: READOUT OF BAHRAINI FOREIGN MINISTER'S OCTOBER 12
VISIT TO DAMASCUS

Classified By: CDA Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During an October 15 meeting covering the U.S.-Bahrain Gulf Security Dialogue (septel), the Charge asked MFA Assistant Secretary for Coordination and Follow Up Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa for a readout of Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa's October 12 visit to Damascus. Noting he had received only a quick briefing from one of the Minister's senior advisors, Shaikh Abdul Aziz stated that the visit stemmed from Syria's desire not to be left out of any possible progress on peace issues. In his speech to the UN Security Council, Shaikh Khalid had only spoken about the Arab initiative on the Palestinian track, but did not raise Syria and the Golan. When asked about this by SARG officials, Shaikh Khalid had told them that he had started with the highest priority issue (Palestine), but that Syria had not been forgotten. Shaikh Abdul Aziz said the visit came about as a result of this exchange.

¶2. (C) Shaikh Abdul Aziz said that Shaikh Khalid met with President Bashar Al Asad and delivered a message from King Hamad. The message stressed that Syria must come into "our camp;" that is, join with the moderate Arab countries, and do what is necessary to follow up on the Golan Heights issue. The Bahraini message stated that the Arabs would take up the Golan cause with full commitment if they observed Syria cooperating on all matters in the Middle East and Arab world. The message emphasized that the Arabs' greatest concern is Syria's relationship with Iran. The Arabs would only take up the Golan issue when Syria demonstrated its understanding of the threat Iran poses to Bahrain and other moderate countries. Shaikh Abdul Aziz said that the message warned Syria not to get caught up in its own propaganda about standing up to the United States and Israel. Syria would be better off joining the moderates.

¶3. (C) Shaikh Abdul Aziz said that Bashar's only response was that he would think about the Bahraini points. However, he made no commitments.

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